ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

[152] Methods and apparatus to search and analyze prior art are disclosed. The methods and apparatus described herein allow a user to query a large database of prior art documents (e.g., patents) and quickly assess the quality of the patent law specific search results. The query input mechanism is designed around a patent claim metaphor with a group of synonyms representing the scope of each claim element. A patent law specific ranking algorithm is used to find the "best" prior art references. A search results graph is used to refine the search on a claim element specific basis. The final search results are presented as color coded web pages and/or "searchable" PDFs where each element (i.e., synonym grouping) receives a unique color (e.g., Internet and WWW may receive the same color because they represent the same claim element).